National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Federal Lands Transportation Program Fact Sheet

Context Sensitive Solutions

Access to and within the National Park System has been a defining experience for generations of visitors.

The National Park Service (NPS) coordinates the planning and implementation of transportation systems that improve the visitor experience and care for national parks by:

- Preserving natural and cultural resources.
- Enhancing visitor safety and security.
- Protecting plant and animal species.
- Reducing congestion.
- Decreasing pollution.

NPS is committed to being a leader in pursuing strategies that can help make park units more enjoyable, cleaner, quieter, and more sustainable for present and future generations.

For more information, visit nps.gov/transportation

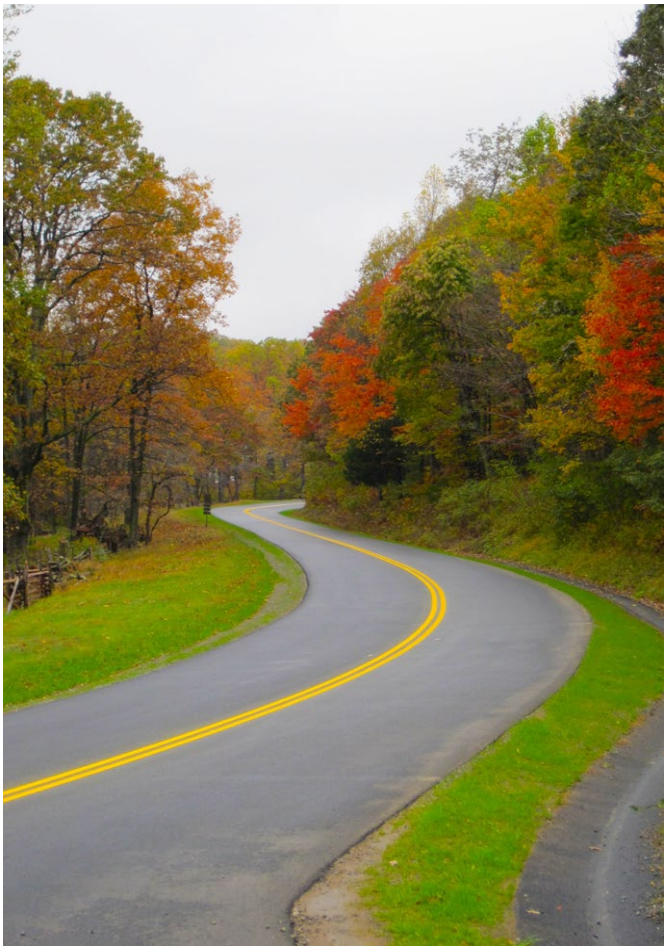
Transportation Program
Mark Hartsoe, Transportation Branch Chief
1201 Eye St. NW
Washington, DC 20005
202-513-7025
mark_h_hartsoe@nps.gov

National Park Service
Jonathan Jarvis, Director

U.S. Department of the Interior
Sally Jewell, Secretary

December 2014
EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA™

Roads, parkways and transportation facilities provide access to National Parks and America's most treasured scenery. Many of these facilities are world-renowned and outstanding artistic, social and technological design achievements that exemplify the harmonious integration of landscape architecture and engineering. Today's park transportation managers have added historic preservation and environmental concerns to minimize negative impacts to scenic, aesthetic, historic and natural resources.



A trip down the Blue Ridge Parkway provides stunning, long range vistas and close-up looks at the natural and cultural history of the southern Appalachian mountains. Completed in September 2013, a recent project rehabilitated 15.6 miles of the north end of the Blue Ridge Parkway including the road surface, grass shoulders and drainage structures. (NPS photo.)

What are Context Sensitive Solutions?

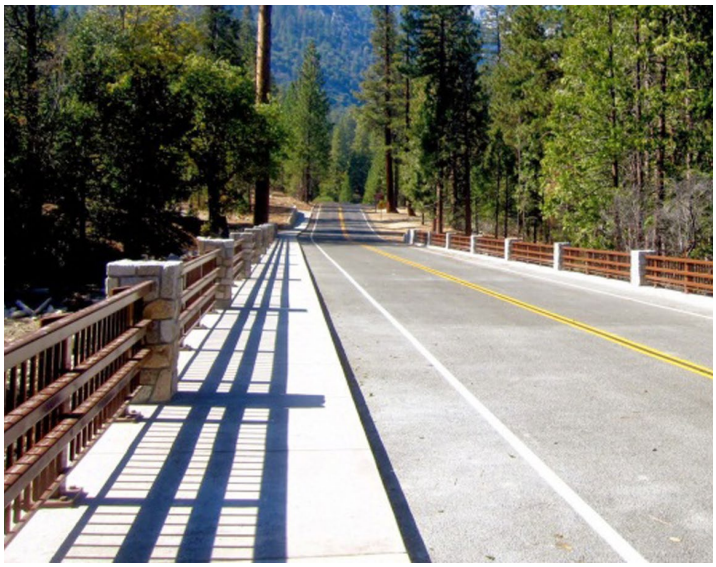
Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) is a set of collaborative, interdisciplinary approaches to planning that ensures transportation facilities fit in well with their physical setting and preserve scenic, aesthetic, historic and environmental resources while maintaining safety and mobility. CSS is a method that considers the total context of transportation improvement projects.

A context sensitive approach

Designers go to great lengths to make sure that park roads "lie lightly on the land," impinging as little as possible on their natural and cultural surroundings. By designing harmonious structures and roadways that employ graceful curves, naturalistic landscaping and attractive rustic features, the National Park Service showcases scenery and other resources while minimizing impact on natural and historic environments.

Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks in California

The original 142-foot Kings River Bridge at Cedar Grove Bridge was constructed in 1939. It was determined in 2009 that, in its current condition, the bridge no longer provided safe, durable, sustainable passage for vehicles at Cedar Grove, and was also unsafe for pedestrians and bicyclists. The bridge was restricting the free-flowing character of the South Fork of Kings River, particularly during high water and flood events. The new Kings River Bridge, completed in 2013, is a 280-foot steel girder three-span structure. Lengthening the bridge and removing the hardened materials from the embankment reduced constriction and restored a more natural stream flow. In addition, the new bridge design greatly improved the bridge appearance and site integration.



White House - Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, D. C.

Pennsylvania Ave. is often referred to as "America's Main Street." A 2013 project placed full-depth asphalt pavement with exposed aggregate to harmonize with the cultural landscape and provide an appealing pedestrian experience. On Pennsylvania Avenue at the White House, the old colored pavement coating was not holding up to the wear and tear of events and access to the White House. The new pavement is meant to replicate the historic cobble or gravel roads. The pavement option was chosen over other options such as pavers or chip seal for durability, ease of installation and maintenance, and overall appearance. The same paving has been used at historic battlefields to replicate the road traces of the Civil War era.

Point Reyes National Seashore in California

Shelters were provided at park shuttle stops in 2013. The shelters were designed to match existing architectural elements at each location in form, material and finish. The sites ranged from the 1870 Point Reyes Lighthouse to the Bear Valley Visitor Center that was designed to blend with the historically significant ranching culture. Other design considerations included: Point Reyes is the windiest place on the Pacific Coast and second foggiest on the North American Continent. Not only did the design respond to these elements, but the construction style, schedule and specific activities had to consider the extreme climate conditions at each site.